If you are thinking about having a child or are already pregnant, be cautious about what you are exposed to in your environment and the products you consume. So, during pregnancy when exposure to even the smallest concentration of a chemical could have negative consequences, it is best to develop the mindset that **less is more**. LESS exposure to potentially harmful substances **is more** beneficial to you and your baby. The following recommendations are designed to help you avoid what might be harmful and find safe alternatives.

### Improving Kids’ Environment

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“Protecting children from environmental health hazards through advocacy, education and initiatives that create environmentally healthy homes, schools and communities.”

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- **Pesticides** in a spray or fogger form. Instead use Integrated Pest Management or IPM to manage pest problems by keeping things clean and neat so bugs have no food and nowhere to hide. Also fix leaks to limit access to water, and seal cracks and use screens to keep pests out. You can find a link to a helpful guide for IPM in your home on the IKE website.

- **Air fresheners.** By law manufacturers are not required to list all of the chemicals in their fragrances. However, analysis of air fresheners and artificial fragrances show that they can contain harmful chemicals such as VOCs and phthalates. To keep things smelling good use essential oils or open a window and keep things clean.

- **Reheat food in plastic containers in the microwave.** At high temperature the toxic chemicals in plastics like BPA and phthalates can leach out.

- **Products made with a high content of soft polyvinyl chloride, or PVC,** like shower curtains and some toys.

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![IKE logo](image)

From Improving Kids’ Environment:

**Improving Baby’s Environment**

Preventing Harmful Prenatal Exposure at Home
**Things You Can Do:**
- **Drink lots of water:** Filtered water is the best. Water is important for a healthy pregnancy but depending on its source it can contain harmful substances like lead, pesticides, or other chemicals. You can get your water tested to see what problems you might have and then choose the appropriate filter to remove them.
- **Eat fresh fruits and vegetables** but remember to always wash them first. Buy organic produce if possible because it is grown without the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers.
- **Wash your hands frequently** with plain soap and water; antibacterial soap is not needed.

Dust and dirt can trap and carry harmful substances. So prevent it from piling up inside your home:
- **Vacuum often with a HEPA filter vacuum.**
- **Wet clean or use a microfiber cloth when dusting.**
- **Leave your shoes by the front door.**

Keep your home in good repair:
- **Fix leaks to prevent mold and water damage.**
- **Seal cracks to prevent access for pests.**
- **If your house was built before 1978, check for lead paint.**

Do pay attention to the quality of your indoor air:
- **Change your furnace air filter as recommended.**
- **Get your home tested for radon.**
- **Use unscented cleaning and personal care products.**

**Avoid Exposure To:***
- **Cigarettes, cigarette smoke, alcohol or illegal drugs.**
- **Beauty routines that involve chemicals** like hair coloring, perms, and manicures because they can expose you to harmful chemicals like toluene, formaldehyde and phthalates.
- **Cleaning products made with harsh chemicals** like bleach and oven, toilet and drain cleaners. It’s easy and inexpensive to make effective, non-toxic alternatives for any cleaning products. Visit the IKE website [www.ikecoalition.org](http://www.ikecoalition.org) for green cleaning recipes. If you are shopping for certified green cleaning products, look for the logos Ecologo, Green Seal & Design for the Environment.

**Dust particles. So keeping your home dust free is important and, if available, consider purchasing items that have not been treated with flame retardant chemicals.**

**Home renovations, especially painting.** Many paints also contain volatile organic compounds or VOCs. Using Low-VOC water-based paint is a good choice, but it is best to let someone else do the painting. Renovations, especially in older homes, can expose residents to hazards like lead or asbestos. It’s best to wait until after the pregnancy for major renovations and make sure they are done by an appropriately certified contractor.

**Thing You Should Limit Your Exposure To:**
- **Non-essential cosmetics, fragrances or other beauty products** as many contain potentially harmful chemicals such as parabens and phthalates. You can find safe personal care products on the Environmental Working Group’s DataC-base at [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org).
- **Canned food.** The lining of most canned food contains the chemical bisphenol-A or BPA which is a chemical called an endocrine disruptor because it can act like a hormone in our bodies. Also, limit the amount of heavily processed food you eat. Some of the additives used in these foods can be a concern.
- **Fish Containing Mercury.** Seafood is a great source of omega-3s for healthy brain development, but depending on the type, fish can contain high levels of the toxic metal mercury. Only eat fish that test low for mercury such as salmon, tilapia, whitefish, sardines, shrimp, and clams. Avoid fish like fresh tuna, swordfish and shark. See the National Resources Defense Council website at [www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org) for more information.
- **Items dry cleaned.** Dry cleaning uses the potentially harmful chemical perchloroethylene or PERC. For those items that do get dry cleaned make sure you air them out in the garage or outside for at least 3 days.
- **Flame retardant chemicals** called Polybrominated Diphenyl ethers or PBDEs. PBDEs are added to furniture and mattress foam, electronics, and many other consumer products. However, PBDEs can easily leach out into your home by sticking to